

Center for Modern Greek Studies
Greek American Oral History Project
Transcription

Tape:

Subject: Anne Condas (Condas)

Interviewer: Elana Vlahandreas (I)

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Tape 1, Side A

Counter: 000

I: And it's December 17, 2003. We're at Anne's home and let's have a voice test from you.

Condas: Okay. We don't have to pick up the microphone. Y'know, we have different microphones?

<tape skips>

I: I left. I had a little stand.

Condas: Did you?

I: Yeah.

I: Now. Okay, we are starting with Anne Condas, and we have your identification as Anastasia Conomos Condas. And, you live in Castro Valley, California. You were born in the United States so we're interviewing you as a Greek-American. And I guess, Anne, I'll ask you our first question: What leads you to consider yourself to be of Greek heritage, and the Greek-American heritage, I should say? And who are the immigrants in your family? We can just start with what were their dates of birth and not- you don't have to know exactly but, what are your parents actually countries of origin?

Condas: Well, my parents were both born in Kythera, in Greece. <tape delay>

I: Okay, go ahead.

Condas: My grandfather came here in the early, or not the early eighteen—the late eighteen hundreds. And I'm not sure whether he came in legally the first time, or whether he jumped ship because there were a lot of seafarers in our family. But, I do have a record of his coming in from Le Havre on a passenger list in 1894. However, he was here before then. He had come with his brother. He had a brother John. The two of them worked on the railroads <tape skips> --man. In fact when we went back to Greece, an old lady stopped me in the street because I had my nephew with me and she said, “*Ah, σε ξέρω* <‘I know you’ {21}>.” “I know who you are!” And she looked at-- up up <laughs> at my my big shouldered Menlo Park nephew and said, “Your Colossus’ grandson.” And I

thought “Well, hey, wait a minute. Y’know, she may be right.” And <tape skips> my grandfather who was a <tape skips> and the stories are that when he was feeling very, very good after a day of laying rails, he used to fight bears. He used to wrestle bears, and of course I don’t put it past him. He looked type <tape skips>

I: I wonder if we can find that certificate and scan it? That would be great. That first time he left Le Havre and got on a ship.

Condas: Yeah. Well, I’ll look for it and see if I can find it okay. Are we still on?

<tape skips>

I: Yeah, fighting bears, grandfather- Now, you’re saying railroad from probably New York to California?

Condas: N- Well, I think he worked- I know that he worked on the East coast. Now maybe the Pennsylvania Railroad, who knows? But after that he and his brother would paint, take a brush <tape skips> and they would paint edges and they would paint, and they would go up and down the Mississippi River painting.

I: My God.

Condas: So, yeah they were quite the travelers. And my grandfather had nine trips to the United States. And when I went to Kythera the first time when I was in my twenties, I was shown my grandfather’s house: he had a big *αρχοντικό σπίτι* <“manor house” {029}>. And, and I was also shown the nine trunks that he brought back from the United States. And every time he’d go home I guess, or every other time, he’d have a son. So he ended up taking three of his sons to the United States. And my father, who was the second son, he had, his older brother was Theodoros and he was Yannis, and then Nicolas. And my father was brought when he was eleven years old.

I: His name-

Condas: My father’s name? Was Yannis. Yannis Anastasis Megaloeconomos. <tape skips> My father being an enterprising gentleman took his boys and he put them to work in restaurants. He had them washing dishes, peeling potatoes, you know doing the stuff that Greek immigrant boys were supposed to do. And he- apparently my father was big for his age. He was tall, so they, the, he could say that he could do a lot more than he could, and of course he probably could because anyone that came from Kythera could do anything. <laughs> They were survivors. My father has a wonderful story about working as a busboy, he worked his way out of the kitchen. In fact, <laughs> when he was in the kitchen he told me he thought he was learning English and he was learning Philippino, from the dishwashers.

I: Oh great! <laughs>

Condas: Yes. So anyway, he finally probably picked up quite a bit of English. In fact, he picked up a lot of English because I had calligraphy that he had done. <tape skips> and I have some of the books that he had read, and he read all the great masters and he read them in English. <tape skips> and Balzac and he read all the stuff that cultured people were supposed to be reading. In fact, he told me that he used to go to concerts. Now this <tape skips> He heard Pat Ariski play and that's why he was always anxious for us to have the music lessons.

I: Hold on I'm going pause it. Just doing another sound check. Okay, sorry start again. So you got music lessons, lucky. What city are we in now? What city are we in now, in your father's-

Condas: Well, my father apparently spent a lot of his youth in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He said that when he was a busboy at the Sheraton Palace Hotel, he was waiting on people like the Carnegies, who were the great finance <tape skips> --problem today because they're such beautiful buildings and they're so <tape skips> But he told me when he was a busboy that they- <tape skips> had to wear a bow tie and he also was fined <tape silent 60-62>.

I: Okay he'd get fined-

Condas: Did we- Did we do the part where-

I: If he didn't wear a tie he'd get fined.

Condas: No, if he dropped a fork or knife, he dropped silverware and made noise on the marble floors he would be fined.

I: Ah.

Condas: Yes. Okay. Well, that all ended when the war broke out, in Greece. And my father and his two brothers went back to Greece, and they joined the Greek Army. Yeah, and I always, I was always incredulous about this, because I thought my goodness, how could my grandfather let all three sons go back to fight? Wasn't he afraid he'd lose them?

I: Mmhmm.

Condas: But, they went back and apparently there were quite a few volunteers, Greek-Americans, who went back to fight in the Balkan Wars. And I can remember-my father was quite a bit older than my mother. He was more like a grandfather to me. But, I can remember him sitting in the kitchen and talking to my godfather,

who was the, about the same age as he was, but my godfather had joined the American Army and fought as an American soldier and of course he had a lot of benefits, because then he belonged to the American Allegiance and he marched in parades, and he could be buried in a military cemetery. But uh, and when I asked my father about this, and I said “Baba” y’know “*Πού είναι ενιαίος σου?* {80}” you know, “where is your *στολή σου? Πού είναι στολή σου?*” Where is, where is your uniform? And, I said you know, where are your medals? Because, I had heard that he was a sharp shooter. And he said, “*Είχαμε ψείρες και καψαμει* {82}.” He said, “We had lice and we burned everything.” And I thought he was just sort of kidding me and brushing me off because I was a little girl then. I was just- what?—five or six years old or seven years old and I was listening to these stories. Because they would go over and over the stories of where they had been fighting: in Albania, in northern Greece. As the war was being- the Second World War was being fought, they would read the newspapers and they would go over the battles that were being fought on the Albanian front and then they would compare that with where they were fighting. So, I’d hear this all the time but I was really much too young at that time, when I was four or five years old, to understand, y’know, just exactly what it was. But, I can remember some of the- mentioning Koritsa and Belgrade and of course these were- I didn’t really know where these were until I took Balkan History when I was in College. But my father had been wounded as a soldier. He spent eight years in the Greek Army, which is--I think it’s miraculous that he survived, but I imagine he survived because I was told he was a sharpshooter, which probably is something like a sniper today. And maybe, because I noticed that I have a picture of him in his uniform, and he was all spiffed up and had, he had a dagger. And-- But, maybe some of the American, Greek-Americans, were able to buy their arms were able to buy armaments for themselves that some of the Greek soldiers didn’t have, but still it was amazing to me that he survived. But, he did have- he was wounded. He had shrapnel in his knee and as long as I can remember my father, until he died, he had a limp. He also told me that he had malaria, and it took him a long time to shake that off. But, he-- when he returned to the United States, he came back to Pittsburgh and in this, in the restaurant business. And then eventually he moved to New Kensington and bought into a partnership in another restaurant, which was a very, very nice one. It was probably the best restaurant in town with the marble floors, and the mirrors, and everyone was wearing bow ties, and tablecloths on the tables, so it was the place to eat. The place to go.

I: Greek restaurant? American?

Condas: It was- No it was it was, it was American. It was pretty- because our town did not have a lot of Greeks. It was a-- a mixed bag of people. Mostly, he had mostly the professionals and the businessmen come in during the day, and then the families would come in on Sunday. And of course my favorite thing with my brother and sister were- was to go and we had kind of a family table way in the back next to the kitchen. And our favorite thing was to go there on Sunday, and we’d order whatever we were allowed and my favorite thing was to order a hot

roast beef sandwich with mashed potatoes, and my brother and sister did about the same except somebody had French fries and then we were given a dime to go to the movies. And we'd go to- and my father told me this was- we were very lucky to get a dime because his father would take his salary when he was a little boy, and give him a nickel to spend. When I went to Greece I understood where that money all went because my grandfather had quite a few fields, quite a few *χωράφια* <"farmland" {122}> and he had a big house, and of course he had a wonderful- he provided a wonderful dowry for his daughter. And that house is still standing in a very very nice area in <tape skips> Kythera.

<tape silent 125>

I: Okay. I guess-

Condas: Now I want to talk about that some more, about Kythera some more.

I: Okay. And, we've already passed the part of what led them to leave. He left Greece. He went home for the Greek War, which probably was way involved way before our World War II. They got in it way before us.

Condas: Oh, the First World War, before the First World War.

I: First World War.

Condas: Before the First World War. The Balkan War.

I: Oh- Oh my goodness. Oh, okay.

Condas: See that's how old my father was.

I: Oh, okay.

Condas: My father was- Well that's what I want to talk about here because-

I: Well, then we should do- yeah.

Condas: Because it's, it's an interesting thing because it's a typical thing that happens with the immigrants.

I: Okay and so we should try to get a date on one of those departures.

Condas: Yeah, well I can probably tell you it was in the early thirties when my father went back to get married.

I: Okay, was she introduced. And you were going to tell me how they met-

Condas: I wanted to tell you- I wanted to tell you that story because I think it's it's kind of a typical story.

I: Okay.

Condas: Yeah, are we on?

I: Yeah.

Condas: Yeah we're on. Yeah, well my father had gone back. He was, he was, he had prospered in the United States. And he was he was a very handsome man as you can see from <tape skips>

I: Big tall man.

Condas: Yes he was. He was very tall. And very tall for a Greek. In fact, in our little community of New Kensington, we were the tallest people. We would tower over everybody. And, and actually he was just barely six feet tall.

I: That's funny.

Condas: But in those days that was tall. That was tall. That's right. We were- in fact, my, my godfather used to call me amazona. Because I was- He thought I was so tall.

I: Laughs

Condas: My, my wanted my grandparents wanted my father to come back to live in Kythera. They had this huge *αρχοντικό σπίτι* < "manor house" {148}> that they built with, of course, the American money, the American dollars. It was- in fact that house was in a, in such a good strategic location that during the Second World War the Italians and then the Germans used it as headquarters. They used the upstairs- in fact, they billeted it and the officers upstairs put the animals downstairs and the family had to move out. And when they left they burned- They tried to burn the house down, so unfortunately that house is not in very good shape. And it's still standing- part of it's still standing.

I: When they left, the Italians were not allies with us? I guess not.

Condas: Well eventually they were. But, but they occupied Kythera.

I: They did?

Condas: Yeah, the Italians came and then the Germans were there.

I: And after- Okay.

Condas: Right. But of course now my father was here in this country during that time. Now this is during the Second World War we're talking about.

I: Okay. Okay.

Condas: Anyway, but during the- in the thirties, my father went back because his parents wanted him to come. And actually my father was the person who took care of everybody. He, he took care of- he'd always send money home. And he took care of his brother because one of the brothers didn't fare very well, Nicolas, who was the third son. After he was released from the Greek Army, he liked army life apparently and became a mercenary and fought in the Spanish war with Franco. And he was wounded and apparently shell-shocked becau- and I remember my parents talking about it. I was just a little girl again. I was- must have been what? three or four years old, but I can remember, I can remember them, vividly I can remember my mother packing and saying oh you know "*Πρέπει να πάμε να δούμε του Νικολά*" <'We have to go see Nicolas' {172}>." And they- I had heard that he had been taken to- is it Bellevue hospital?- in New York. And I can remember her packing the suitcase, and I said to her, "*Μαμά παίρνω ήρθα*" <'take me' {175}>. I want to come with you." And she picked up the pillow next to the suitcase and said, "Well you know this- I can't fit your- a pillow into this for you." And that was supposed to appease me, and of course I was you know crestfallen I couldn't go. But of course, you know, I had my brother and sister were there too. They never asked.

I: Bellevue meaning the?

Condas: Bellevue, I think was, was for people who had mental problems. Well, he was shell-shocked and in those days that was the word they used for- what'd they use that for? I've forgotten what they call it now. There's a new name for it, but anyway. And, but he died. He died of his wounds. And they- when they returned, they had apparently buried him there. So I- I've never seen his grave, but I think that's where he died.

I: A paid mercenary.

Condas: Mmhmm. Mmhmm.

I: So how did your parents meet?

Condas: Well, my father, we'll get back to <laughs>. His parents wanted him to go back and get married, so like a good son he went back there. And apparently my grandfather was going to do the selecting. And I heard this story when I was grown- I was, y'know, in fact I was a young married woman when I heard this story because my, my Pittsburgh cousins used to say, "Oh, it must have been a love match because, y'know, your father was so handsome and your mother was so beautiful." She was she w- They had heard she was the village belle. So, and I

always believed that. But, I overheard my- well I was part of the listening- the listeners but and I, I heard this conversation between my mother and the cousin who was her peer. And my cousin Pani said, “Oh it must have been love match. Penelope, it must have been a love match.” And my mother said- no she said, she said it was “My father-in-law picked me. And he used to follow me around the village.” Here is this big Colossus was following, would follow her around, and she said at one point she was, had gone from her little village, which was Agia Anastasia which was a good 45-minute walk, or maybe half hour by donkey. And she used to go to the big town of Potamos to do her marketing, and she said that she would see him behind her. And at one point, she said that this big Anastasi came up to her, the grandfather, and he, he put his face up to hers and she said, “He wanted to see if I was wearing rouge.”

I: Wow!

Condas: Because my mother always had this beautiful complexion with rosy cheeks. So she said she didn't think too much of it because she was sought after. She had many suitors, many people- and but she was the baby of the family. She had two older sisters and an older brother. And by the way, the two older sisters are still alive.

I: How old?

Condas: And my mother is in her nineties.

I: Oh.

Condas: Yeah, my mother is in her nineties and her two older sisters are still alive. One is in Peraia and one is in Australia, and their, their minds are wonderful. They have great stories to tell. I haven't met the Australian one, but I, I see the, the, the one in Peraia, she is about ninety-six now, every year when I go. Anyway, my mother told me that she was the baby and her two- uh her brother had- was sent off to school to become a merchant. And he was the oldest. And then, her- Caliope got married to someone in Peraia and she left. She was married young also, she must have been seventeen, eighteen years old. And then the, the next youngest sister was sent to Peraia, with the older sister y'know and, because somebody had said well we have a good *γαμπρό* <“suitor” {230}> there, so they kind of sent her over there to see if it would work out. And so while she was leaving with her sister, they got better acquainted and so she was married off there. And, my mother was home with her mother and they were taking care of the, the home front. Now, it was a very, very hard life for them because my mother's father died when she was a young woman. She was not even a teenager, I think. In fact, she said she never saw her father. Her father had gone off to Australia and he would send home money sometimes, and sometimes he wouldn't. Because in those days I guess you either had to trust the mail or trust

someone to take the money back to Kythera. Many, many, many people went to Australia from Kythera. In fact, the summers are full of Australians-

I: Australian-Greek.

Condas: Yes, and that's why Kythera's called Kangaroo Island. <laughs>

I: Oh, okay.

Condas: Yeah, so but anyway, my, my grandfather came home but never made it Kythera and he di- he was ill, and died on the ship as he was coming into Peraia harbor. So my mother said she really never saw him. So for all practical purposes she was raised by her mother, and the children and the mother were the ones who tilled the soil, and they herded the sheep and the goats, and the- my grandmother apparently would hire herself out with her ζευγάρι <"pairs"> with her with her two oxen, to plow fields. And, they - you know she- they really, I, I think that- I've always said that if I ev- were ever stranded on a desert island I would want my mother to be with me, because my mother was a survivor. She knew how to do everything. She knew how to weave cloth, she knew what plants were edible, she knew how to kill chickens, to skin rabbits, to catch rabbits. She knew how to do everything. And that's why I think she's ninety years old, and she still she's still growing our vegetables and taking care of me.

I: I think we should- we need to go and work the earth a little bit.

Condas: Oh yeah, well she's, oh she does. She's got a garden that you wouldn't believe. Well anyway, she was so- she was used to- when her sisters left she and her mother took care of the χωράφια <"farmland" {265}> all the- and they had quite a few: they had six or eight χωράφια, and on some of them they, they grew crops on some of them, they herded the animals. And they got along. And so, she was, she said she was content to be with her mother. And one day her mother said, she said well, she said, "You know, people have been offering for you and y'know you really need to pay some heed." And my mother said, "No" she said "I'm just happy doing what I'm doing here." You know. And she said that her mother said, "Well" she said "Look, I want you to give some serious thought if we meet up with this Anastasis Megaloeconomos." And my mother said, "No no no." And so, when they went to market on Sunday, because Sunday was market day, and it still is in Kythera. In Potamos, everybody, since Venetian times, goes to the market. And it's also the, the Nifopazaro, it's where you find <laughs>. Yeah, so she said that- now she's telling the story to this cousin because this is the first time I had heard it. And she said- well she said, "We, we went to the market." And mother said, "Let's go to the caffenio." And they sat down to have coffee, and here comes Anastasis Megaloeconomos and he and the grandmother started negotiating, and my mother said, you know she said, "I" she said "I was so angry" she said you know "I was angry and demoralized." She said, "I felt like a piece of meat." And that's the first time I have ever heard her say anything like that. And

I thought my goodness, this story – never, never told us that, never said anything to the children. Yeah, so, but my grandmother apparently agreed to the engagement and we- my mother left, but when she went home she said, “No, I have agreed to the engagement” and my mother was very, very angry with her mother. And she said, “Why did you do that to me?” And she said, “That’s when your grandmother burst into tears and she said, ‘If something happens to me, I don’t want you living in your brother’s house as a servant.’”

I: Okay.

Condas: And so she said, “That was it.”

I: Okay.

Condas: That was it. And I thought, my goodness, you know, we didn’t realize. I just never realized these poor women had very little choice, very little choice.

I: Yeah.

Condas: So, that’s how that came about. My father and mother were married and apparently it was the wedding to behold because here was this rich American, you know, dressed in his best and his bow tie and he had a new way of serving meat, of cutting meat <laughs>. And so they lived in Kythera the first year. And my mother said she had a wonderful honeymoon because she’d never been off the island, in fact, she’d never been to the southern part of the island because she wasn’t allowed, and my father took her on a honeymoon to Athens.

I: Oh.

Condas: And, oh, yeah, she said she had a wonderful time and ever since then Athens has been her favorite place, she just loves to go back there. And she said when she came back people were saying, “Oh, my goodness, she’s going to put on airs now because he bought her a hat, too.” <laughs> Well, anyway, she was- apparently she got pregnant right away, and my sister was born in the early ‘30s. They lived in the big house, the big *αρχοντικό σπίτι* <“manor house” {325}>, they lived upstairs and they paid rent, hmm, to the grandparents. My mother doesn’t have very good memories of the- of her in-laws, who apparently were not too happy about -- her mother-in-law and her sister-in-law were not too happy about her being from this tiny little village of Aghia Anastassia.

I: Okay.

Condas: So they more or less ignored her. So, she was left to take care of this baby by herself. And my father was called back to- because there was something going on with the business. Apparently it was the financial situation in the United States, you know, this is the ‘20s and ‘30s. And so he had to go back and he said, “I will

send for you,” and he left. So he left her with this infant, and we have a picture of my mother and my sister on the passport and she has this little eleven-month-old <laughs> barefoot baby in her arms.

I: Okay, she came eleven months later?

Condas: Yeah, my mother came when my sister was eleven months old. And, but she said it was, it was a wonderful voyage because in spite of the fact that she had this eleven month old baby in diapers and she had to wash the diapers by hand, but she said there were people there that she knew.

I: Huh.

Condas: And, who would help her with, you know, with the baby and would, you know, they would take turns holding the baby so that she could enjoy the voyage slightly, and she did come first class, because, you know, here she was this- my father was pretty well off, so she came first class.

I: What year do you think this was?

Condas: This was 1932 maybe, or '33.

I: Okay. And they get off, they disembark in New York or where?

Condas: I think they disembarked in New York and I asked my mother if she went through Ellis Island and she said no because her husband was a citizen.

I: That's right.

Condas: She came as a citizen.

I: Okay. We've got – now you were born next? Or who was born next?

Condas: No, I had an older sister whose name was Thamiani {check spelling-367}, she was named after my grandmother. My oldest sister is Chrysanthy who was named after my father's mother, which is the custom, and the second one was named after my mother's mother. And I was named Anastasia, and I always thought I was named Anastasia because by the time, y'know, I came around – oh, and by the way, by the time I came around, my sister had died.

I: Oh, no.

Condas: My, the one who-the little girl who was before me.

I: Oh.

Condas: Yes, there was something about a mastoid problem.

I: Oh.

Condas: Yeah, so I was a very much loved baby because I was taking the place of this baby who died, and I think, and I always thought I was named Anastasia after my grandfather because they figured, well, this is the third one and we haven't had a boy yet, but my mother said, no, she said, you were named after our {tape cuts off}

Side B: Counter 000

I: Okay, we'll start recording from here. Um, so we've got now three daughters and there's no sons.

Condas: No, but we did have a son.

I: Oh, okay.

Condas: Oh, yeah. My brother was born two years after, and apparently my mother told me that this was my baby because I can remember that we were inseparable. I can remember, I can remember, we lived in a big house, you know, that had – the big eastern houses, you know, with the basement and the first floor, and the second floor, and the attic, and everything. And I can remember when my godparents used to come and it was bedtime for him, I always used to put him to bed and read him a story or tell him, and I, I could never understand why I had to share a room with my older sister. What I would do was I would steal away during the night and sleep in his closet <laughs>. Well, unfortunately, this was – you know, when we were little it was during the war and everybody was working, everybody who could would work, and so both my parents worked at the restaurant and my sister had to take care of us, cause she was the oldest. <tape skips> my brother and I would gang up on her, poor thing, and <tape skips> she was, we were always buddies, and we would compromise and I'd say, "Now look, if you play with dolls with me, I'll play football with you for awhile." So I was a little bit of a tomboy but he never really did the dolls very much.

I: Any memories of this war going on now in America – blackouts or anything?

Condas: Oh, yeah, oh my goodness, yeah. We had blackouts, quite often, because we had one of those, what they call a sun porch that was not just screened in, it was glassed in, and I can remember watching the lights go out and seeing what we could see and seeing the spotlights searching the heavens for the- for the- for airplanes. And I can remember, too, the air raids during school time, when we would all go down to the basement and we would all sit around with the teacher and read stories and tell stories. Oh, yeah, it was kind of a scary time I can remember too that our parents, especially my father, was just a super-patriot. We

bought more bonds, we saved stamps, y'know the little red stamps and the green stamps, and we collected grease and we flew our flags. And my father was, that newspaper was out every night and we would listen to FDR on the radio with his fireside chats. That was quite a time.

I wanted to tell you a little about that- that small town that we belonged to. My parents being the immigrants they were and honest, hard-working, y'know. We all when we were older, we all had jobs. My sister worked in the restaurant, I was too young. And of course, we all went to school, and we were expected to get good grades and do all that stuff. Y'know, do our piano lessons and... But we all- we all worked and I, when I was in junior high school, I was offered a job at the city library. It was a small time library. And it was quite an honor- only the brains got to work there. And it was a wonderful experience for me because, being a small town library, we got to do everything. We got to do, we got to do the- in fact, I think, one of the- we got to do research and we even, when I got- when I was older, because I had that job until I graduated high school, I even learned how to catalog books.

I: I was just going to say cataloging.

Condas: Oh, yeah. I learned how to catalog books. I used to write book reviews. In fact, since I was- I was an artist, I was artistic <laughs>. And I think that was one of the reasons why I was hired. They wanted me to do all the bulletin boards and the window- we had a big show window. So every month I would have to- I would change the window and do a new display in it. And I can remember working far beyond my hours, on the weekends on my own, dreaming up new things to do and learning new techniques and dressing dolls and doing all kinds of stuff. It was wonderful.

I: Was that a salaried job with a paycheck, or?

Condas: It was- Yeah, it was a salaried job with a paycheck.

I: From the city?

Condas: Right. I think I made- I started at 25c an hour and I worked my way up to 35 <laughs>. And then, when I was in high school, besides that job, I also worked at the Dainty Dairy store, as a soda jerk, I guess is what you'd call it- waitress. And, y'know, I learned how to make candy. It was a confectionery. They made their own chocolate candy and I learned how to make sandwiches. And my favorite, of course, was tuna fish, which we didn't have at home. We didn't have foreign foods at home, like that. Peanut butter.

I: You had Greek food at home?

Condas: Oh my goodness. We had Greek food. My mother was the best cook and she still is. And my mother could make everything. She not only made Greek food, because she was very adventuresome. She learned how to cook American food, and she, she- I mean we had lemon meringue pies you wouldn't believe. Boston cream pies. I mean, she was great. She was. pecan rolls, mm.

I: Now who were the chefs in the restaurant?

Condas: My father. My father was the chef and then he had a night chef. And, but he didn't cook for us. And I remember when my mother went to Greece when I was about 15 years old there was one time when I couldn't keep up the cooking myself, cause I was supposed to be the cook. And he made us- he made us restaurant meatballs, and, of course, he did it the restaurant way- he made about 200 of them. <laughs> And I can remember--and I thought--and they were terrible. They were just not, not my mother's. But my father did not cook at home—my mother did. And she even made us our lunches. We would, we'd come home for lunch and she would have our φακή <“lentils”> or our φάβα <“split peas”>.

I: Oh, so you didn't have to carry this-

Condas: No, we didn't have to carry it. Although when we were older we decided we wanted to do that. And also when we were older we decided we did not want oatmeal for breakfast and we would sneak out before she could get up and do it. So it was wonderful.
But I wanted to tell you about this business of working. See, everybody was supposed to work and I can remember when my brother was getting old enough to work, they were trying to figure out what to do with him. And I think he was about 11 years old, I'm not sure. And so my mother said, she said I think we're going to have him work for Jimmy the shoemaker. And I thought “Well.” Not the, excuse me, not the shoemaker, excuse me, it was Jimmy the shoeshine. Well, Jimmy the shoeshine was on the other side of town. And that was a little bit worrisome because we lived on the upper, upper side of the tracks, which was the better side of town. But this was on the other side. But all the businesses were down there. And this was, Jimmy the shoeshine boy, man, had quite a few boys working for him and there were always men in and out of there, always men in and out. He got a salary and he got tips, and he really made quite a few tips. And I didn't find out until later when my <laughing> brother and I were in college together, when, y'know, I would say, “Y'know I can't believe that people spent so much money shining their shoes.” And my brother said, “Well,” he said, “you know, the men would come in there to get there shoes shined, but they also wanted to know where the red-light district was, and where the <laughs> where the houses of ill repute were.” And if you were on the ball, a shoeshine boy was on the ball, you could tell them where they were and how to get there.

I: I was thinking maybe selling liquor or something.

Condas: No. No. They were apparently the information center for <laughs>. And so here my mother was trying to teach my brother about, y'know, about making money and this kind of thing, and there he was. Y'know. He was—I don't think he ever told her, how he got his tips.

I: Are they still on the East Coast?

Condas: No. No. We all moved to the West Coast when I was 17 because the town was, New Kensington was the aluminum center of—the world, I guess. It was the Alcoa, the Aluminum Company of America. It started going down and then the steel mills went. And so the area was—became very depressed and still is. Because there's very little industry over there. Beautiful, beautiful part of the country. It's south--southeastern Pennsylvania. It's—New Kensington's about 16 miles from <tape skips> coal-mining town—area to. But it was just going down, and my mother could not see a future for us there. So on her trip to Greece when I was 15, she had met up with some cousins and they gave her the address of a cousin here in Bakersfield, California, whose name was Mathromatis. And she went to visit him when she came back, took my sister with her, and my sister liked it so much she stayed with these cousins, and she began working for the—the state of California. And she stayed with the state of California, actually, until she retired. And she became the first Californian. Well, we finished out my senior year—my junior and senior year back East and then my mother said, “Time to move,” and my father reluctantly agree, and we moved bag and baggage. Well we actually, what we did was, we researched it. Because I can remember getting books on the West Coast, and looking at maps, and I remember reading a book about how San Jose was going to become the fastest-growing area in California. Now this is in—we're talking about the 1950s. And of course when we got to California, went to Bakersfield, and my mother said, “Don't worry. We're not staying here. Don't worry.” And I said, “No, I'm glad we're not staying here.” So, we traveled to—we went to San Jose, looked at that, went to San Francisco, San Jose area, and we also had been reading about Long Beach, you know the--as far as the Los Angeles area was concerned. And we also looked into did they have colleges? Did they have, y'know, Greek communities? And, of course, she got a lot of help from the relatives here, the cousins. And we decided on San Jose. And it was hard to tell in those days that San Jose would become this booming place that they had predicted cause it was all orchards. It was beautiful apricot and almond orchards, and of course those disappeared.

I: Who was emphasizing all this education that all the daughters, you and your sisters--?

Condas: Well, my sister—it was sort of nebulous about my sister because she had taken what they call a commercial course in high school and was very, very good at it. Y'know, she was—and in those days you would either become a secretary or a nurse or a teacher. Y'know. And that was it. Or you get married. And of course

my parents had other things in mind for us. Well, I was an extremely good student and of course they expected that I was going to go to college. When we came <laughs>—One of the reasons we came to San Jose was because I had read about Santa Clara University. In fact we bought a house that was near Santa Clara and I found out that Santa Clara was just for men, for boys.

I: Oh.

Condas: Yeah. But there was San Jose State there, so that's why I ended up going to San Jose State.

I: K. Do you wanna go on about your education then, or then do you want to describe your <unintelligible> identity?

Condas: Well, my education was—since, y'know, I was kind of—I was wondering what in the world I was going to be doing. I was—when I was younger I was supposed to—I was always the class artist. And my teachers were so encouraging, and they always thought, for some reason, I don't know what it was, I didn't take this gift seriously because, y'know, with my Greekness, I thought, "Well, y'know. What do you expect? The Greeks are all artistic. Y'know, look at the statues." I remem—my father used to take us to, on the weekends, to Pittsburgh, to the Carnegie Museum. And they had the most beautiful plaster casts of Greek statues. I was kind of raised with this kind of a thing, even though our, we didn't have a lot of Greek people in our town, and we, half the time we didn't have any church. Because it was such a small town, they didn't send us priests. So I didn't have, we didn't have Greek school half the time either because the priests were the ones who did the Greek school. And, but obviously, very, very aware of being a Greek. And our teachers at school too, y'know, I think they probably thought were descendants of Aristotle <laughs>, direct descendants of Aristotle and Plato. They sort of, I was always the class artist, and the always patted me on the head and "You're gonna do the yearbook, and you're gonna do this." "Show your picture" or "Show your painting." And so I didn't, I sort of thought, "Well yeah, but all Greeks do that." Y'know, kinda thing. And I was always hoping that I would become better at the reading and writing stuff, y'know, the literary stuff. And of course it's kind of interesting that <tape skips> English teacher <laughs>.

I: You did?

Condas: Finally.

I: Oh, okay.

Condas: Finally, well I became a—I was a reading specialist for 17 years and then when the money run out, I became an English teacher. But we had—I mean, we were very aware of being Greek, too, because when we would sit around, the stories

my father would tell would be about, would be myths. We knew all the myths, about y'know the gods, the goddesses, and that kind of thing.

I: And was he a self-taught man?

Condas: Well, he came here when he was 11 years old, but in those days, in Kythera, if you went to school that long, it was like going to high school, I think. Because my mother only went to school for two years. Yeah, the girls, girls didn't go to school. They—I think she only went two or three years to school and my mother's Greek is excellent, and she, she reads, writes, and her *ορθογραφία* <"spelling" {159}> is wonderful. She—Her English is excellent. Y'know, she still reads, she reads—we get her the <laughs> I remember, I remember her giving me my spelling words, and I, I'd say, "Mom, not that way." And then when I became a teacher myself, I was an elementary school teacher, and I can remember ordering the spellers, and I always gave her my speller, the teacher's speller, so that she could do the exercises that the kids did. So she was always interested in improving. Of course, in those days, the women, the immigrant women, all had to learn fairly good English, they had to learn American history and all that stuff because in order to become a citizen, they had to take tests.

I: Oh, Okay.

Condas: Yeah. And so my mother—my mother's a very bright lady. She's extremely bright, in fact she's—she does her own income tax, she used to run the rent—we used to have rental property and she's the one who did that. She still does the investments. And she had, what? Two years of schooling in Kythera and then her mother sent her to the girl's, I think it's coeducational at that point because it was a small place, but then she sent her to a girl's school to learn the embroidery and all that stuff. Of course, you know, she did all the beautiful handwork. And when she was older, she sent her to dressmaking school. And when we were kids, my mother made all our clothes. She even made our coats. In fact, in fact, I used to remember, to my chagrin, she used to buy yardage for my sister and me, so she used to make the dresses twin dresses. Yes. And then when I wore mine out and my sister grew out of hers, I would have to wear my sister's dress. Yeah, same material for I don't know how many years, and then my mother would add a ruffle on the bottom. And of course by that time, the ruffle was bright <laughs> was bright where the rest of the dress was faded because I was tall so we would, I would be wearing that dress. But anyway, these—my mother and father were, I think, educated there, you know, and also were intelligent and bright enough so that they were well self-educated.

I: 'Kay.

Condas: Yes.

I: What values of your Greek background would you like to pass on?

Condas: Oh, would I like to pass on? There's so many. There are so many. I've already passed on all the traditions. In fact—And I think one of the reasons I did is an incident that happened when I was, I was a junior or senior in high school. I was selected to go to a model United Nations assembly, in—now we were in Pennsylvania and this was going to be in Chicago—so they were going to take a group of school kids to Chicago and there were kids all over the United States. And we were supposed to take part and we were supposed to take part and represent a country and the country I was supposed to represent was Poland. And I even had a Polish costume and the whole business and we had—when we had our assembly we were supposed to act as if we were representative of that country. And of course that was easy because in those days Poland was part of the Soviet block, so all I had to do was keep voting no for everything, y'know because they would vote no. Y'know, the Soviets always voted in a block and they always voted no. Y'know, shall we—unless it was invading somebody. So anyway, this was the first time I had ever left home overnight. Good Greek girls did not stay overnight at anybody's house. No. So this was the weekend. But unfortunately this was during Easter weekend, our Easter.

I: Oh, no.

Condas: Yeah. It was during Easter weekend, so I, it was—it was a wonderful weekend. I came back on this big high, came back on Sunday afternoon, and walked into the house and the table was partially cleared off and there were just crumbs, there were crumbs of *αυγών* <“eggshells” {215}>. And the broken eggshells, red broken—And you know what? I vowed I would never miss a Greek Easter again, ever. Ever. I mean I just felt so left out. I just felt bereft. I didn't see *Ανάσταση* <“The Resurrection” {218}>. I didn't have that. And that's one of the traditions that I'd like to pass on. It's, it's not just—and it's a value too, I think. Y'know, it's something that's part of you, it's part of the family. And this is why I have, I have Easter for my grandchildren. In fact, they want to invite all of their friends. <Unintelligible {223}>. So that's been a tradition I've kept. But I think, I think that the other things that we need to pass on are all the good things that have come from Greece, y'know like the, what the philosophers have said about moderation, everything in moderation, what they said about sound mind and sound body—they had a lot of good ideas. The more I, the more I read about what mistakes the Greeks made, the more I know that if we had listened to those <laughs> the philosophers, y'know, those philosophers who had the common sense, that we would be better people. We still—we would have been better people, we will be better people. In fact, when I was teaching, in high school, I used to teach The Odyssey, and we used to teach about the tradition of hospitality and <tape skips> a stranger was always welcome. These are, these are things that we need to pass on. <tape skips> is a stranger in your land, he needs to be treated well. And it's, it's a Christian kind of <background noise-{241}> do unto others.

<tape skips>

I: In your, well, traditional, in your life, tradition-wise, anything that you think we're missing now? That you had, that maybe we don't have, here now? I mean something that was more Greek on the East Coast than here? Or any, anything, y'know, with the Internet, sharing the home? You see these big living rooms now but they're not full of people anymore.

Condas: No they're not. You know something that is something that I miss. In fact, when we came from the East Coast, one of the things that I missed was what, what we normally did, and that is the girl of the house, the girl, when somebody comes to the house, you prepare, you prepare the *δίσκος* <"tray" {255}>, the tray. You put the broiler on the tray, you put the glass of water, and you know, the little *γλυκό κουτάλου* <"sweet spoon" {259}>, you know the sweet on the spoon, and you serve that. That's your job. You know, you, they're there for the first twenty minutes, that's what you do. And then after you serve that, then you go make the coffee. And of course, you know, we were always, and the girls were always supposed to serve—and we knew you're supposed to serve the men first, of course the priest first, and then the men. The oldest men first, and then the women. <laughs> That part I don't miss. In fact, what I did was when I started thinking about it, I was <background noise- {266}>. The older people first of course, but then the women first, but I thought what the heck. Yeah. But I know there's something about the hospitality that's, that's lacking. And the other thing that I think is the conversation. I remember my godparents coming and it was the inclusion of the children in the conversation because every day my godmother and my mother used to call each other. We were just very, very, very close together. And she was from Macedonia, they were Macedonians. But they were just wonderful, wonderful people. And they didn't have a girl of their own: I was their girl. In fact that trunk over there belonged to my godmother and she told me, she said, "That's my, my *προίκα* <"dowry" {278}> and I want you to have it." And it, by the way, it was in the museum, in the San Mateo Museum part of the—

I: The wedding dress?

Condas: The pieces. No actually, the wedding dress was my daughter's, but the handwork, some of the handwork was hers and her sister's.

I: I went over to see that. It was small, but wonderful.

Condas: Yeah. And when Gentle put it together, I let her go through the things in the trunk and it was just very difficult deciding what to take because there were so many <background noise- {285}>. My godmother was a rich man's daughter and so she had quite a dowry, she had quite a few things in her <background noise- {287}> material, the threads they used were beautiful. Of course, then, her sisters were all, had all been sent to special handcraft schools, so there are some just really elegant pieces there.

I: What's her name?

Condas: My godmother?

I: Yeah.

Condas: Was Melpomeni Staphan. It was Staphanou.

I: Okay. I guess I saw it then. I went to the cemetery.

Condas: Yeah, yeah. You saw her things. You probably saw her engagement picture. It was one of the ones that was on the wall.

I: Yeah.

Condas: Yeah, but the corner, the wedding dress was my daughter's but the other corner where they had the dowry items were all from there, and there were a couple things from Kythera. But, but I remember, what I miss is the conversation and also the including children in the conversation because when my godparents came over, it was—we just were full of joy to have them come and to plan to bake the cake, that they were going to come. And then, we had a long, there would be long periods of conversation they would talk to each other, even though they talked to each other on the telephone every day, the women. But the men always had something to say and we were always, we maybe didn't contribute to the conversation, but we were always on the fringes listening. So we learned so much by listening to them. In fact, everything I learned about Kythera, because I never went to our island until I was young married, a young married woman, I knew, I just felt like I—Kythera was mine and I was part of Kythera. That I just felt so much at home there.

I: The storytelling is our history book.

Condas: The storytelling. It was.

I: Better than a history book.

Condas: Yes. Definitely.

I: I think now when we don't turn off the tele—television, we're not getting that conversation you're talking about.

Condas: Right. Well you notice I don't have a television set in the living room.

I: No. And I'm <unintelligible {318}> television too

Condas: It's downstairs.

I: I mean now, nowadays.

Condas: Because when, of course at our house, we were, y’know—Of course, in those days, they had, we had the radio though because we all listened to the radio and we all had our Sofia Vembo records <laughs>. We had those records.

I: What’s that?

Condas: *Ρεμπέτικα* <“Rebetiko/Rebetika-music style” {325}>. We used to get records from Greece, you know the, on our victrola. <laughs> Yeah, we used to dance in our living room. It was just, it was fun. And Sofia Vembo was a big *ρεμπέτικα* <“rebetika” {328}> singer, and she was also, she was part of the resistance from what I understand.

I: So this is Greek dancing?

Condas: And Nikos Gounaris and all those people, we used to sing along with them and learned a lot of songs. And of course when I became a teacher then, I learned that the best way to learn language is to learn the songs. And when I was teaching Spanish to little kids, I used to teach along Spanish song. I could sing “Happy Birthday to You” <laughs> in Spanish.

I: And was that, Spanish was their first language?

Condas: No, no. I taught Spanish as part of the curriculum, when, back, way back then when I first started teaching. We used to, we taught, it was like a little elective for the children. So every day, in fact when I was supposed to go back to work I was offered a bilingual job and I didn’t take it because I don’t believe in bilingual teaching. I believe in immersion. You have to, you have to—if you want kids who are Spanish-speaking to learn English, you teach them English, not Spanish and English. My mother learned English, she had to—

I: Had to immerse.

Condas: That’s right.

I: We should talk about you meeting your husband, too.

Condas: Oh my goodness! Yes!

I: I know that wasn’t a fix-up. That was probably a natural—

Condas: Oh, yes. That was—I belonged to the choir in San Jose when Father {Greek name 359} was our beloved priest. And he had two children, Connie

{tape was stopped}

I: Okay, go on.

Condas: Yeah, this is. She's now Connie <laughs> and we sort of hung around together. And we would go to dances. I was in college. I was a freshman in college or something or. No, I was older than that. I was, must have been a junior in college, yeah. I was a junior.

<tape skips>

I: We're gonna pause and we're on to our next tape. Hold on.

End of Tape One

Tape Two, Side A: Counter 000

I: 1, 2, 3, 4. Okay, Anne. And you went to a Greek dance.

Condas: Oh well

I: You were

Condas: We were, well I'll tell you. At the time, that particular time, I was up to my ears in school. I was a junior at San Jose State and I was in the choir and I had a couple of jobs—I worked at the library because the library background got me easily into San Jose State Library. And it was a nice job because I could study in between. And I had a job in a, a <tape skips> that sold fabric and I don't know what else I did—I did all kinds of other things. But anyway, and I was trying to keep my grades up, which I, I did pretty well. In fact, I was surprised at how easy it was <laughs> to graduate summa cum laude.

I: Oh, she quietly mentioning graduating what? Say that again.

Condas: I'll tell you. The reason I'm saying that is because my mother said, "You should have gone to Cal because I don't see you doing a lot of homework." <laughs>. But it was good because that way I could keep up my social life and do a lot of other things. Anyway, the only trouble is you didn't meet the caliber person you really wanted for a, for a, you know, a life companion. I never thought so, at San Jose State. I thought that the caliber student, which was supposed to have been wonderful there wasn't what I had expected. I had expected university-type people. And I had dated some Stanford boys, so I knew the difference. And so I was never into dating boys at San Jose State because I just, I, you know, I didn't think they were too bright. <laughs> It's terrible, but especially not the ones I found in the classes. After I took my general education classes, I was taking education classes. You know, and some of those education collegiate classes

didn't have too many young men in them for one thing, and the caliber that they had, I kept thinking, "Oh, my goodness, these people are going to be teaching my children." *Όλη όνομα μας* < "All our names" {24}>. But there were some good ones. In fact I found out later that the education that I had at San Jose State really prepared me to become a better teacher than a lot of the teachers I found along the way in my thirty years of teaching. They really knew how to do it, better than some of these kids from Cal and Stanford, who had the big majors and the, I should say sophisticated majors, and didn't really know how to teach. So anyway, but getting back to how did I meet George.

I: Yeah <laughs>

Condas: Ah, poor George <laughs>. So actually I was more into what am I going to be doing about getting my homework finished, about going to school, about doing all this stuff. And by the way, I also worked during summers, which is another story that I think I'll tell maybe later cause it tells you a little bit about being a Greek. But my mother kept insisting, "No, you gotta go to these-- gotta go to the dance." Especially she wanted me to go to the dance with my sister. I had the older sister. My sister was still unattached. She didn't like any of the boys that were around and so this—there was a dance in San Francisco. My mother said, "Go with your sister. Go, go." And of course, I said, "This is not the time to go." Because my hair was not the way it should be or anything. So, we called each other up, the choir girls, and we said, "Well if we're gonna go to the dance, we're just gonna—" "We found out that when you go to the dances you're just like—we would end up being wallflowers. We would be choice pickings for some of the young men from Greece and we were very snobby about that because-

I: Yeah, everybody was.

Condas: Yeah in those days, we were snobby and we had terrible names for these boys, "banana boaters."

I: Terrible? What's wrong with us? They were the best ones?

Condas: Well, you know something, in a way they earned their <unsure of word-{45}> because they were very, what should I say, they were very touchy-feely.

I: Oh really?

Condas: Which I didn't, I did not appreciate. And also most of them were short.

I: Oh.

Condas: Yeah, you know, they would come up to my chin and y'know look down my cleavage. And I wasn't—and of course I really wasn't into getting chummy with anybody. I always knew that I-- I had a goal. I wanted to get my degree, I wanted

to teach, I wanted to travel. And then some day along the way maybe I'd find, you know, some ideal mate. So my mother kept pushing. So we would call each other up, and we would say, "Okay." Well the girls all decided to go in pink. So there were four of us <laughs> all wearing pink dresses. <unintelligible-{53}> San Jose girls are gonna be standouts in our pink dresses. And of course, we always, we tried to take our brothers with us, even thought they were younger brothers, they were tall. That way, they could get us out of jams. For instance, if we were dancing in close contact with one of the Jews, we called them, or the Banana Boaters, especially one that had garlic on his breath, we could make the "hi" sign to the brother and he would come and cut in. And we'd be saved, right? So on that particular night, I can't remember whether my brother went, but for some reason I remember the pink dresses. And when we got to the dance, I think it was at the Rowing Club <unintelligible {60}> in San Francisco. And we spit ourselves out there in our pink dresses and there was—by that time we knew some of the people from other dances. And I remember there was a man whose name was Don Athens, and he used to come and—he was an older man, but he used to like to dance the younger girls around and he was a Greek-American. Very nice, very avuncular kind of a person. Well he came by and complimented us on our pink dresses. He said, he introduced us to some people who were around him, and then he introduced me to George. And I thought, "Oh" At that time, George's hair was <laughs> it was light brown and George had blue eyes. Well not really blue, they're more hazel. But they're blue. And he said, "And he's from Cal. He goes to school at Cal Berkeley. He's a graduate student at Cal Berkeley." And I didn't hear the last thing. And so, but he asked me to dance, and so I was dancing and he was asking. I thought he was an American boy. Because he looked—he did not look Greek. He was tall and he was sort of thin and had these bluish eyes. And George, just like now, always spoke in polysyllables. <laughs> Yeah, polysyllabic. I thought, "Oh well. Cal graduate student." So we were dancing and he asked me what my name was and since he was an American, I always told the Americans my name was Anne. My family always called me Tasia, but for outsiders, my name was Anne. And that's why I became Anne to his family. And to this day, his sister still calls me Anne. My family does not.

I: Oh. Tasia.

Condas: You know, that's another Greekism thing. I don't know what it is. I've read this in, this Chicano writer who talks about having his private name and his private language and his public name and his public language. There was this privateness about me, this Greekness about me, that I wanted to keep private. Whenever I introduced myself to somebody, it was always, "I'm Anne," until I found out they were Greek. Then if they asked me what my Greek name was, I'd tell 'em. So anyway, so I told him my name was Anne and we danced and we danced. He just kept dancing and dancing and talking to me in this polysyllabic <laughs>. And then he introduced me to his sister. And we started laughing because I found out when I talked to his sister—his sister was my age. Now George was a graduate student, he'd been at Berkeley for I don't know how many years. So he's about

six or seven years older than I am. But his sister was my age. She was a junior in college and I immediately, just kinda, we clicked right away. And she said, "Have you ever been to Berkeley?" And I said, "No." And she said, "Well, why don't you come and visit?" And I said, "Well, you know what, that's very nice." And so we all kept company that evening and George kept asking me to dance. And when I met Cleanti <spelling? 95>, however, that's when I said, "Oh, you're Greek." And I found out that George was Greek also. So the evening ended with George inviting me to go to Berkeley and I thought, "Well, honey, I'm not gonna go to Berkeley for you, but I'll come for your sister." <laughs> Because I wasn't—what am I going to do in Berkeley with this guy I hardly know. So when I—we fixed a time for me to go to Berkeley to stay with Cleanti in her boarding house. But apparently George had talked to her and told her that he really wanted me, to spend time with me. So he took us around. So I spent a lot of time with him and her and then, of course, I stayed with her and her friend. And we're still, she still has the friend, this Chinese friend. <laughs> And that's how it started. And when I finally met his family, they were just so tickled to death that George found a Greek girl. They couldn't do enough for me.

I: Wedding date? Time? When did you get married?

AC: We got married about a year after.

I: Okay.

AC: Maybe a year and a half. Actually I finished school and in the meantime, unfortunately, when George and I were courting he would come down to San Jose <laughs> to see me and he would take me out. So my father only met him once. It was—he came down for my sister's birthday. George came down. And we had actually at that point, we had collected quite a few young men and I was—I was, not dating, but sort of dating an engineer. A young engineer from the East Coast who kept wanting me to talk to his aunt on the telephone and this young man from Stanford, who, by the way, was Homer Balabanis' son. Homer Balabanis was the president of Humboldt State University. I didn't know that when I was dating him, but I did get to meet the father before, which was really an honor cause he was a lovely man. I did get to meet Dr. Balabanis who was a very fine person.

I: So I guess your dad then had his—

AC: So my—we had a birthday party for my sister <background noise {130}>. After considerable time, I was dating all three of these boys <laughs>. Greek boys. And—in those days dating just meant going out to the movies or something or out to dinner. I don't know what dating means now.

I: There is no such thing.

AC: —completely different. I don't know. Anyway, we had a birthday party and we had cordoned off the patio and the garage and we had music and we were dancing and of course all my choir friends were there—the girls were there. We had all these boys. And we invited some from San Jose State and some from wherever. We were all buddies. And <unintelligible {138}> invited George, and the Stanford boy was there and the engineer was there. It was—my parents of course were there. And we had a great time. And then after everybody went home, my parents finally went to bed. And I asked people to look for George and this engineer. And so George now <background {143}> standoff <laughs>. Who was going to leave first? And finally I think George told him to please leave. So George and I went for a long walk and we kinda figured out that we wanted to go together. We were going to go steady. And so the next morning, the first thing my father asked was , he said, “Who was the last one to stay?” And I told him. I said, “It was George.” And he seemed to be very pleased. And unfortunately he died the next day.

I: The next day?

AC: He died the next day. So my father really didn't—he sort of knew that I was engaged to be engaged to this young man, which was too bad. He died actually—it was either the next day or that next week. Yeah, so I lost my father when I was about 19 years old.

I: Was he retired, your dad?

AC: Yes. He was retired.

I: Hard for a Greek to retire I bet.

AC: But George and I spent a lot of our courting time at camp. <laughs> Because I had, during the summer—this comes in with our Greekness. One of the wonderful about being Greek and knowing the Greek language is you know all the roots. All the scientific names for Lepidoptera and Hymenoptera <check spelling {158}>. And dinosaurs and Tyrannosaurus Rex and all this stuff. Well, when I was taking science classes, and I took quite a few of them because I was very good at it, I was making As and A pluses and my professors were so impressed with me because I could spell all those things and pronounce them. So I consequently got a scholarship from the Autobon Society. And I also got—I got a job with the Sacramento Area Girl Scout Council as their nature counselor <laughs>, which is really funny cause I had barely ever been on a hike. I had—I loved my science classes and I loved the field trips. And I loved memorizing the names of all the birds all the plants and the trees and all this stuff and I also, because of that, I also got really good TA jobs. I was TA for my science classes cause I could spell all those things, I was TA for Psych 1A and B or whatever it was. And I was also a TA, by the way, for Byzantine History. And I read all the papers for Dr.

Panagopoulos who was teaching at the time. His English was not very good, so I would read all the papers, the essay questions for him and correct them. <laughs>

I: Okay. Where was he teaching?

AC: He was teaching at San Jose State.

I: Okay.

AC: That was the other job I had. But anyway, but the job that I got during summer was being this nature counselor. And of course I had hardly ever been away a night. And so there I was supposed to go out there with my sleeping bag and spend the summer with the Girl Scouts. And one of my jobs of course, was to go out with the older girls, with the 14-year-old girls on their overnights. And they were the ones who were supposed to start everything from scratch, build the never done anything like that. I was just a nice Greek girl. <laughs> And the first night out we were sleeping in the snow. Yeah! It was May! We went out there because we were supposed to go for pre-camp orientation or whatever we were doing out there which was—

I: Scouting.

AC: Yeah, which was a good thing cause I had never even been a Girl Scout. I wasn't a Girl Scout. I wasn't allowed to do things like that. No. Good Greek girls weren't Girl Scouts. So anyway, I remember the first night under the tree with the—at Bird Gulch—and I was sure it was a bear coming cause I could hear crunch, crunch, crunch, crunch and I could hear—on my sleeping bag and I was trying to hide in there and it ended up, I finally, found out after the second night of sleeplessness that it was a porcupine up the tree and it was knocking down pinecones. At any rate, my first night out with the 14-year-olds where we were supposed to build our own everything, latrines—they were doing latrine duty and of course, “Where's the nature counselor? Bring her here!” And they had found a rattlesnake. So it's my job, right, to get rid of it. And then they, of course, nobody was gonna go to sleep. So I had to figure out how to kill this rattlesnake. And that was a time when I was really—I knew that I was not a good camper cause I would have worn high boots. So I figured out what you do is, to kill a rattlesnake, you have to—it's really a two-man job. You gotta get the shovel and have somebody hold it down with the shovel and the other one cut its head off, right? Cause it doesn't stay still. Anyway, that was only the first rattlesnake, of that summer. So I had two years of that. Cause I started when I was a sophomore. And two years up in the high Sierras there where I learned how to be very self-sufficient. I learned to be a Kytherian. And then the next two years I spent, or the next year—and this is after I met George—I spent as a counselor at Easter Seals <background noise {214}>. So he used to come. I had to stay <unintelligible> I had to stay there the whole summer. And so George would come on the weekend to spend the weekends in the men's section. And he was part of the camping family. And they used to—our camps names, He was Pogo. And so that's where we did most of our

courting that summer was at this cripple children's camp. There I was not the nature counselor, I was the recreation director, in charge of all the recreation and in charge of—because I had, by that time, was supposed to have experience. So that's where George and I did our courting.

I: What are you daughters' names?

AC: Our daughters' names are Efdehia Domianik <check spelling {224}>. And she was named after my mother-in-law and my grandmother because she was conceive on our first trip to Europe. George and I decided that before we started our family, we were going to take this trip we'd always dreamed of to Europe and to Greece. However, we took our sisters with us <laughs>. They'd never been either. So, but we did—George and I were roommates, and they were two roommates cause that's how I got pregnant. But he had to leave early and so did my sister-in-law, so they went after we did our—we did Denmark, we did Denmark <tapes skips> days here, three days there, except in Greece we spent a week. They left after Greece and we went to Kythera, we went to the island where I first met my grandmother.

I: And you found all the history there?

AC: I found—well I found some of the history cause that was the first time I went. And then I went many summers after that, after I raised my children. But I—it was wonderful thing because I just—my grandmother and I were just—you know, like she had been waiting for me all her life. So by the time I got there, we had gone with our cousins, our two boy cousins. There's Uncle George's son and Ailotis', <unintelligible {246}> son. It was very, very funny cause they were wonderful people and they were very protective of us, the girls. So we went to visit my grandmother on this very primitive island in her little farmhouse. I remember all the girls had to sleep in one room and all the boys in the other. And it was naptime, of course, we wanted to be with the boys so we could talk because we were having a wonderful time with them. They were Greeks and we really had never had experience with Greeks who had such great senses of humor and who were our cousins. My grandmother refused to let even have naptime together because it was not proper. They would take us on little fieldtrips with her donkey. And I can remember one day going down to the beach on the donkey. And then on the way back up, I got very, very ill. And by the time I got back up, my grandmother said, "She's foaming at the mouth! What's wrong? What's wrong?" I was—I kept saying, "Oh my goodness! I feel very nauseated, I don't feel good." So my grandmother's watching me and toward that evening, she said, "Oh!" She said, "I think I know what's wrong with you!" <laughs> "I think you're pregnant!"

I: Second daughter's name?

- AC: Yeah, so anyway, I told my grandmother, I said, “Well if I am, I’m going to name it after you.” Cause she was just a wonderful person. She said, “No. You need to name you—if it’s a girl, you name her after your mother-in-law.” So that’s why my daughter has two names. So she’s Efdehia Domianik. But we call her Diana <laughs>. Cause they used to call my mother-in-law Effie, and I didn’t want her to be Effie. And the other one is Penelope after my mother.
- I: Penelope is your mom’s name.
- AC: Yeah. Penelope. So we have a bunch of Penelopes. That’s why I have always been a daughter of Penelope. I’m a mother of Penelope, I’m an aunt of Penelope.
- I: I guess we’ll close now unless you have any other important things to preserve of our customs here.
- AC: It’s just that I have always found being Greek such a wonderful advantage. I mean there have been very, very, very, very seldom have I ever been discriminated against for being Greek. It’s just been a wonderful advantage from the time I was in grade school and my teachers thought I was a direct descendant of Aristotle and Phiddaeus <check spelling {284}> and all those artists who naturally should be able to be <laughs> and philosophers and good students, too. When I was in college, to my professors, who just were very, very kind and very encouraging and <tapes skips> when we were both in college. It has been just kind of a plus, too, to have that tradition and that background, because the friends that we’ve made have been interested in us and we’ve been interested in them. My best friend in college, who was my best friend until she passed away a couple of <tape skips> was Jewish and we had the best time comparing. But we raised our children—we raised our girls together. And we decided when were raising our children that if we—if anything happened to either one of us, we would want the other family to raise the children. And our girls are very, very good friends. In fact, when my friend died last year, she wanted be buried here. She actually had moved back east. They brought her back here and she’s buried in the Jewish part of the cemetery. It’s right next to the Greek cemetery.
- I: Oh. Mountain View.
- AC: At Mountain View. She would love it there. And we had the *μακαρία* <“lunch memorial” {307}> here at my house. And her daughters were here with me. And the same thing with one of my best friends who’s Japanese. And we just really enjoy each other because—I enjoy her because she’s Japanese, she enjoys me because I’m Greek.
- I: So it’s the non-mixing of the ethnic backgrounds that the bond may be because the Japanese who are 100%

AC: Well, we find we have so much in common. And back when I was writing my dissertation in graduate school I had a Chinese friend. And we just wrote each other because we had a lot in common. We found out that when we were growing up our parents had a lot of ideas the same about being, for example, the Greeks have this thing about being women. About women should be seen and not heard. Of course we know though that the women are the necks <laughs>. Men are the head of the family, but the women are the necks. But the way our mothers talked to us about being polite <tape skips>. Just how y Chinese friend never came without gifts for the family and I never thought about sending her home without something, a gift <background noise>. And the same thing with my Japanese friend. In fact, today she sent me, I had another hat. And I sent her *κουλουράκια* <“cookies” {335}> and we buy—like sisters, we buys each other clothes. It just—there’s something about the cultures that are the same. And you wonder if you would have that kind of thing with a non—a person who didn’t have an ethnic background.

I: Maybe a fourth generation American.

AC: A fourth generation American. Yeah. Because I love the richness of their cultures and their foods. There just <tape skips> much about the Jews too that are similarities. In fact when I used to go to the temple with my friend, I heard the cantor and it just, the music, the chanting is just so similar. I just felt at home there. And I—there’s just something about it that’s—adds richness to our lives and I think it kind of opens you, too, to want learn about these things other things and want to compare.

I: I guess we’ll close and I’m looking at two photos. Perhaps I’m taking—shall I take them both?

AC: You know what? How about if I send you copies?

I: Or we can scan them and send them to you, One is of Anne’s father in his Greek army uniform with his rucksack on. He had been in nine years of fighting—

AC: Eight. Eight years. And he had walked in from the front. This is a postcard that he sent. He’s got a rifle, he’s got the boots, his helmet on, and he’s standing in front of that sign that says “Antheniun Thessaloniki” <check spelling {370}> with a tower underneath it.

I: That’s a background drop of his photo. And then she’s got a picture of her dad and mom’s wedding?

AC: That’s right. And I remember I told you that in those days the men were at least twenty years older than the women, although the match—they just—it was a wonderful match—

End of Tape 2, Side A

Tape 2, Side B

Counter: {000}

AC: —some of those pictures in there from my grandmother's farmhouse. I took them off the wall because I was afraid it would fall down.

I: Really?

AC: Yeah, this is how they did them in those days.

I: Some of this—Anne needs to go through her house and go through some of the pieces that she's got from her grandmother's and her mother's village. There's a whole chest in the corner that we could just do a whole history piece on, from her godmother I think. But, we're signing off, and thank you very much Anne. Thank you for your time and it's an honor and a pleasure to know you. The history's enriching. It's wonderful. Okay, bye-bye.

<tape stopped by interviewer>

I: Test, 1, 2, 3, 4. You go, say 1, 2, 3, 4.

AC: Test, 1, 2, 3, 4.

<background noise>

I: We're recording again with Anne and it is now December 29th. We're just doing a little closure. Anne Condas, we were going to just go over your professor's influence and where you got—where your Greekness stated at, and how you met—something about how you met your husband. Not how you met him, but something you wanted to tell him.

AC: I wanted to put closure on the story about how I met my husband because my father had asked me about who the last person was who stayed and I had told it was George. And I don't remember if he asked me why, but if he had asked me why, I would have said, "Because George is everything that I ever wanted in a man. I would never, never be bored with him. He was a person who loved music, he played violin for the Berkeley Presbyterian Church <laughs>. He was—one of my teaching friends described him as being courtly and a friend of mine in Greece recently said that he was "*Ένα αρχοντικό άνθρωπος* <'A stately man' {20}>". And he is, he really was. His whole family was that way and they still are. He just is a Renaissance man. He knows something about everything. And you'll find that out when you interview him. Another thing I wanted to put closure on was this business my grandfather, when he came here, and he was going through all the kinds of work that immigrants do, he said that he and his brother were—had a

bucket and brush and were painting bridges up and down the Mississippi River, of course the Ohio River, Pittsburgh has two rivers that come together, the Monongahela and the Allegheny. They become the Ohio River, so there are many, many bridges there. And of the steel mills were coming in. When my grandfather left the last time, he went back to Greece, but his brother John stayed here. And by then he had other Greeks working with him and for him and they had the Conomos Painting Company. Now the Conomos Painting Company is over a hundred years old. It was a multi-million dollar concern. They still are painting the bridges from Buffalo to New Orleans, they—It's in the hands now of John Conomos, who is the grandson of the John Conomos who established the company. When I was a girl, we would go to Pittsburgh for vacations and my favorite vacation was when I went myself to play with my cousin John, who was exactly the same age. And I remember Uncle Bill always took us downtown for lunch. He'd take us to the Sheraton Palace Hotel and he would engage a table for us—separately, the children would sit at one table, and he would sit at the other table, smoking cigars with his friends. And then after we had our “usual” and the usual was the club sandwich. Then he would have us come over between that and desert and introduce us to his friends. And I remember his friends were people like the CEO of US Steel and Pittsburgh Plate Glass. And in those days, I didn't think anything of it; they were just other gentlemen who were smoking cigars. But now when I look back on it, I thought, “Well, I'm glad that those were Uncle Bill's cronies.” And Uncle Bill was the one who really built the company and made it into the multi-million concern because it was wartime and that's when steel was needed. Now the Conomos family has always been a very proud family, but I didn't find out how proud I was of being a Conomos, although my father always told me we should be, until I was a TA for Byzantine History. And I was a TA for Dr. Panagopoulos when he was—first came to San Jose State University. He needed a TA badly because <laughs> his English wasn't very good. He was an immigrant, too. When I became his TA, I read his papers in US History. He taught US History because he was a Hamiltonian, believe it or not. His expertise was in American History because he said he thought it was more interesting, because Greek History was old hat to him. However, he taught Byzantine History and Balkan History. So I read papers for him, and his—primarily the essays because my English was better—in those three subjects. Is pent hours and hours and hours. And the more I read, the more I got interested in it, and the more I learned about Byzantine history and about my background. In fact, Dr. Panagopoulos was the one who pointed out to me that my name, which is Megaloeconomo, meant “high treasurer.” And during the Byzantine Empire, where there was a great bureaucracy, these people were in the higher echelons. Well I knew from my parents that the Megaloeconomi, along with the Cominae, the Cominasis and the Adonidis and some other families from the first families of Kythera had come from Constantinople. But this really cemented it because here was a man who knew his Byzantine history. So there we were. Now you can imagine what an ego-builder that is, to find out that your family was one of the higher echelons in the bureaucracy of the Byzantine Empire because I had learned then the history of Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire, the good and the

bad. And there was a lot, <laughs> a lot of Byzantine History that was not anything to be proud of. I also became more aware of Greece and what was there. And because of what I had learned from Dr. and Mrs. Panagopoulos and the doors they opened for me, I went, when I became a teacher and had the summers off, I went to Greece and I went to Anatolia College during two of those summers, took institutes there and saw a great deal of Northern Greece: we went to Pella, I took classes in archaeology, in ancient Greek art. And one of the people that I met there was Professor Petsis, who was the person who, the archaeologist who uncovered Pella. I also had the opportunity to go to the Ionic Center and attend classes there for two summers and spend two summers in Helos. I also learned about the Gennadius Library—spent many summers there with the Panagopoulos and met people in the American School of Classical Studies. And that's how I met Steven Miller and got interested in that phase of archaeology. So Dr. Panagopoulos and that cool class in Byzantine History really, really opened my eyes to my heritage and probably were the people who were responsible for my being so interested in promoting Hellenism. And that's why I'm still promoting Hellenism in Modern Greek Studies and even when I was president of the Hellenic American Professional Society. And now of course I'm with the Kytherians because I'm so proud of my island.

I: And the Kytherian Society is also out of Modern Greek Studies?

AC: No, the Kytherian Society is composed of people who have their roots in Kythera, from that island of Kythera. And of course you know that's the island has great history. And right now, our latest project is to bring the archaeologists here who will talk about the Byzantine finds there because there are many, many old churches there that date back to the ninth century, eleventh century. And they're just now getting them catalogued. And hopefully they will, not restore them, but at least try to preserve them. Because some of the places, like Paliochora which was the Byzantine capital at that time and was decimated by Barbarosa is just crumbling away, and it really needs to be preserved.

I: Thank you. That's another capital I didn't even know about.

AC: Well, if you weren't going to Hawaii you could come and listen to it.

I: It's raining.

AC: But I will give you a little book that we published. Because I sat for one summer, every morning, at the hotel in Potamos with an old gentleman who is now 96 years old, an old Dutchman, who went Kythera through the Royal Council of Churches to help them build sewers and bring running water to the house and build roads. And he collected stories from the villagers about Paliochora, about what happened, and why it was never resettled again. There was a curse put on it, so we had this little booklet that we have written that I have translated with him. We sell that in the little souvenir shops and give the money to him because now

that he's retired and 96 years old, and he can't <laughs> he can't be producing his buildings and his roads.

I: In Greece, you sell them?

AC: Uh huh. We sell them in Greece, but we also sell them here to people who are interested because it's really a ghost story. And that's one of our Kytherian projects.

I: Okay. Anything else on your closure? I know you have a favorite author. Anything else that you wanted to close with?

AC: I have a favorite author, and well, I have several favorite authors. One of them is Kazantzakis and another one is Cavafy. And I really loved the poem that Cavafy wrote about Ithaca, about how what is important is not the going back to Ithaca or—Remember Odysseus? Went on his journey to Troy, he took—he was actually forced to go to Troy and the fight the Trojans to bring Helen back. Right? And then it took him ten years to come back. And Cavafy writes about this. He says what is important is not just getting back to Ithaca, but the journey on the way because—you remember how many journeys Odysseus had on his way back home? Well that's what's important is to enjoy the journey and to get as much as you can out of it. To benefit from that journey. And I have certainly benefited from being a Greek and being of Hellenic ancestry.

I: I can see that. And I can see you're also joyful.

AC: <Laughs> I think we have—We've said it all.

I: Check your notes.

AC: Yeah, well. I think so because I told you about George and I told you about the names, about the Conomos name and about the Panagopoulos's and I certainly hope that you will have the opportunity to find Mrs. Panagopoulos and to find her stories.

I: Okay thank you. Thanks, Anne.

End of Interview {129}